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**Neoliberalism and Social Patterns:
Constructions of Home and Community in
Contemporary New Zealand Fiction**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Masters of Arts in English
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Abstract

Constructions of home, family and community as ways of belonging have been ongoing discourses in New Zealand. This thesis examines constructions of home and family in works of fiction by four contemporary New Zealand authors: Alice Tawhai, Charlotte Grimshaw, Witi Ihimaera and Damien Wilkins. It asks how the main sociological characteristics of the period are presented and performed through fiction. Through these characters and their situations these authors expose the social fantasy of contemporary New Zealand society: that of individual reflexive opportunity.

The twentieth century has seen a changing social fabric with loosening of bonds and the increase of individualism. The New Zealand way of life is changing, with increasing interconnectedness of the world through globalisation. Neo-liberal ideology, itself a response to globalising effects, has exacerbated social fragmentation and income disparity. Neoliberalism, a retreat of the state from both financial control and support of individuals, presumes a logic of market-forces and rational choice based on the maximisation of opportunity. This has implications for the individual's sense of self and ways of belonging as the New Zealand subject is increasingly premised on personal responsibility. This thesis looks at the economic and sociological analyses of neoliberalism and asks if they are confirmed in the fiction.

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